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UNCLAS MUSCAT 000011

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/ARP (TROBERTS), NEA/PPD (CWHITTLESEY), NEA/P
(FFINVER), INR/R/MR
LONDON FOR GOLDRICH
PARIS FOR ZEYA
USCENTCOM FOR PLUSH
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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MUSCAT MEDIA REACTION: SADDAM TRIAL, ISRAEL, AND THE
YEAR IN REVIEW

The Best Defense Is A Good Offense

11. The government-owned Arabic daily "Oman" published an editorial on December 30 under the title "You Too":

"The United States is not insisting on the death penalty as punishment for the crimes against humanity perpetrated by Saddam Hussein. Yet Iraqi judges intend on prosecuting him to the fullest extent of the law on all charges brought against him. Despite insurmountable evidence of his crimes against the Iraqi people, convicting Saddam will prove to be a difficult task. Saddam's lawyers will argue that his intention was to stave off rebellion -- not to destroy the lives of his people. Saddam's defense is a controversial issue being debated in the international arena, especially since many harbor doubts about the legality of America's invasion of Iraq. If Saddam's defense attorneys get UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to admit the war in Iraq began illegally, and if Saddam's top advisors do not testify against him, the defense will likely try to clear Saddam of culpability by shifting the blame to his sons Udai and Qusai."

Sins Of The Parents

12. On December 31, privately owned Arabic daily "Al-Watan" carried an editorial entitled "Holding Children Responsible":

"Israel recently passed a law that holds Palestinian children and immediate family members accountable for the political actions of the parents, based on Israeli standards of political activism. The law stipulates that any aid provided to Palestinian families can be revoked or discontinued if the parents are found to have been activists against Israel. This law, which violates basic human rights, further underscores Israel's attempts to mute the Palestinians by withholding basic necessities such as food and medicine from children. Inhumane practices like these are unprecedented, and are simply mechanisms for forcing the Palestinians to bow to the will of the Israelis."

From Bad To Worse

13. "Oman" published an editorial on January 1 entitled "Terrorist Events Prevail In 2004":

"The year 2004 was characterized primarily by terrorism, violence, and atrocities, despite great efforts (primarily American) to combat these ills. In the past year, the world witnessed 22 acts of terrorism, including the attack on the U.S. consulate in Jeddah. Middle Eastern conflicts remain unsolved, and all attempts at reform were frustrated. Joint Arab cooperation remains tenuous; the Arab Summit was postponed indefinitely. Iraq is still beset by violence, even after the transition of power to the Iraqis in June. In the Darfur region of Sudan, human rights violations escalated to such a degree that the international community forced the UN Security Council to intervene. Finally, the year concluded with a giant tsunami that wiped out thousands across Asia. Can things get any worse in the world?"

BALTIMORE